



## TIPS FOR SURVIVORS OF A TRAUMATIC EVENT

# Things to Remember When Trying to Understand Disaster Events

The effect of a disaster or traumatic event goes far beyond its immediate devastation. Just as it takes time to reconstruct damaged buildings, it takes time to grieve and rebuild our lives. Life may not return to normal for months, or even years, following a disaster or traumatic event. There may be changes in living conditions that cause changes in day to day activities, leading to strains in relationships, changes in expectations, and shifts in responsibilities. These disruptions in relationships, roles, and routines can make life unfamiliar or unpredictable.

### No One Who Experiences a Disaster is Untouched by It.

- It is normal to feel anxious about you and your family's safety.
- Profound sadness, grief, and anger are normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Acknowledging our feelings helps us recover.
- Focusing on your strengths and abilities will help you to heal.
- Accepting help from community programs and resources is healthy.
- We each have different needs and different ways of coping.
- It is common to want to strike back at people who have caused great pain. However, nothing good is accomplished by hateful language or actions.

### Signs that Help Is Needed

- Disorientation or confusion and difficulty communicating thoughts.
- Limited attention span and difficulty concentrating
- Becoming easily frustrated.
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt.
- Depression, sadness, and feelings of hopelessness.
- Mood swings and crying easily.
- Difficulty maintaining balance.
- Headaches/stomach problems.
- Tunnel vision/muffled hearing.
- Colds or flu-like symptoms.
- Difficulty sleeping.
- Poor work performance.
- Reluctance to leave home.
- Fear of crowds, strangers, or being alone
- Increased use of drugs/alcohol.

### Ways to Ease the Stress

- Talk with someone about your feelings (anger, sorrow, and other emotions) even though it may be difficult.
- Don't hold yourself responsible for the disastrous event or be frustrated because you feel that you cannot help directly in the rescue work.
- Take steps to promote your own physical and emotional healing by staying active in your daily life patterns or by adjusting them.

A healthy approach to life (e.g., healthy eating, rest, exercise, relaxation, meditation) will help both you and your family.



If you or a member of your family still has trouble coping, ask for help. Consult a counselor or mental health professional. **You can also contact the United Way for help by dialing 2-1-1. If 2-1-1 does not work from your phone, you can call 1-877-541-7905.** In the workplace, you may be able to get assistance from your human resources department or your company's Employee Assistance Program.

### Additional Resources

**Mental Health Association for Greater Baton Rouge:** [www.mhagbr.com](http://www.mhagbr.com)

**Keep Calm Line - 866-310-7977**

**Behavioral Health Recovery Outreach Line**  
833-333-1132

**Louisiana Spirit Crisis Counseling Program**  
<http://lds.la.gov/LouisianaSpirit>  
[LouisianaSpiritInfo@la.gov](mailto:LouisianaSpiritInfo@la.gov)

**Louisiana 211- Dial 211**

[www.louisiana211.org](http://www.louisiana211.org)

**Mental Health America:**  
[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

**National Suicide Prevention Hopeline:**  
800-784-2433

**National Suicide Prevention:**  
800-273-8255

**National de Prevención del Suicidio:**  
888-628-9454

**National Suicide Prevention - Options for Deaf & Hard of Hearing:**  
800-799-4889

**Veterans Crisis Line:** 800-273-8255

**State Bar of Texas Legal Hotline:**  
800-504-7030